Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5887th meeting

Wednesday, 7 May 2008, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Ms. Pierce	(United Kingdom)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Verbeke
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Jurica
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Spatafora
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Ettalhi
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United States of America	Mr. Wolff
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

The situation in Sierra Leone

Sixth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (S/2008/281)

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08-32986 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Sierra Leone

Sixth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (S/2008/281)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Sierra Leone, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Pemagbi (Sierra Leone) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Dmitry Titov, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Titov to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Frank Majoor, Chairman of the Sierra Leone Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of the Netherlands.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Majoor to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations. Members of the Council have before them document S/2008/281, which contains the sixth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Dmitry Titov and His Excellency Mr. Frank Majoor. I now give the floor to Mr. Dmitry Titov.

Mr. Titov: I would like to thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to present the sixth report (S/2008/281) of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL). The report provides an update on major developments in that country and highlights the key challenges facing it. It also contains the Secretary-General's recommendations on the mandate, structure and strength of the integrated office that is being proposed to succeed UNIOSIL. My remarks in introducing the report will be relatively brief. I will focus on the preparations for the local elections, the challenges being faced by the security sector, the socio-economic conditions in the country, human rights and rule of law issues, peacebuilding support activities and the proposed mandate, structure and strength of the post-UNIOSIL office.

Since its inauguration into office in September last year, the new Government of Sierra Leone has taken several major steps to implement its reform agenda, as well as policies that promote transparency and accountability. As mentioned in the report, President Koroma has outlined his vision for change for the country, Cabinet ministers have signed contracts agreeing to implement the priorities outlined by the President, Parliament has continued to function and the judiciary organs are fully operational.

The political and security situation in the country remains generally calm, although incidents — sometimes violent, as took place recently — are emanating from political intolerance between supporters of the main opposition political party, the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), and the ruling political party, the All People's Congress (APC).

On 5 July, Sierra Leone will take another major step towards enhancing its democratic process, with the holding of local council elections. The United

Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in close cooperation with UNIOSIL, has deployed a United Nations electoral assistance team, which is providing technical support to the National Electoral Commission. Through a UNDP-managed basket fund, international partners have pledged and already contributed a considerable amount, totalling $24.6 million, required for the elections. The candidate nomination process for the elections ended on 20 April. Some 1,300 candidates have submitted nomination papers for 456 councillor positions in 394 electoral wards, while 65 candidates have submitted nomination papers for 19 Council chairperson or mayor positions in the country.

As members of the Council have seen from the report, the United Nations is providing technical assistance to the National Electoral Commission and is also assisting with the procurement of voter registration and election materials. As a result of the very tight timelines for the elections, the Electoral Commission, in consultation with the political parties, has agreed to shorten the voter registration period. In addition, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is making efforts to expedite the procurement of election materials.

However, there is concern that political tensions between supporters of the SLPP and the APC will continue in the period leading up to the local council elections. Therefore, UNIOSIL is working closely and actively with all key stakeholders, including the Government, opposition parties, the National Electoral Commission, the Political Parties Registration Commission and civil society to ensure peaceful and violence-free elections. In addition, with the assistance of UNIOSIL, a security plan, funded through the UNDP Basket Fund, is being prepared by the Sierra Leone Police. The United Nations Mission is also helping to strengthen the Political Parties District Code of Conduct Monitoring Committees, which usually plays a vital mediation role in the electoral process.

We are glad to report that considerable progress has been made in enhancing the professionalism and effectiveness of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces and the Sierra Leone Police. UNIOSIL has been helpful in training and mentoring the police and in building the capacity of the Office of National Security, which coordinates all Sierra Leonean security sector agencies, while the United Kingdom-led International Military Advisory Training Team has been assisting with the training of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces. In an effort to streamline the armed forces, the Government recently approved a reduction in its strength from a personnel of 10,500 to 8,500 persons, which is expected to take place over the period of the next two years. Despite these achievements, both the army and the police continue to be plagued by serious logistical deficiencies, in particular shortages of accommodation, equipment and fuel supplies, especially for the conduct of patrols. Moreover, the national security agencies still require assistance in building capacity to combat drug trafficking and to improve airport security.

On the subject of socio-economic developments in the country, regrettably, there has been little improvement on this front. The soaring prices of staple commodities and fuel have exacerbated the overall security conditions in the country. Although the Government is sensitizing the population about the external factors leading to the rise in the cost of the country's main staple — rice — there is a real risk that discontent over price increases could trigger unrest. The Government has created a task force to deal with the food crisis and has promised to work towards achieving self-sufficiency in rice production, which will obviously require time and considerable investment to achieve. Currently, the country is producing only 30 per cent of the rice it consumes.

The peace consolidation process in Sierra Leone has the potential to be compromised if the country does not generate adequate employment opportunities for the multitude of young people. It is hoped that the Bumbuna Hydroelectric Project, which is expected to increase power supplies across the country, will create considerable employment opportunities and increase private investment in the country. In the short- to medium-term, the country will continue to need generous and sustainable support from the international community to create jobs.

As regards human rights and the rule of law, I would like to inform the Council that there has been an overall improvement in the human rights situation in the country, as evidenced by the increased respect for civil and political rights, the adoption of legislation on the rights of women and children and the work of the Human Rights Commission. However, efforts to implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are still very slow. The Justice Sector Development Programme funded by the

United Kingdom's Department for International Development is playing a critical role in building the capacity of the justice sector. However, the Government will continue to require long-term external support in order to establish credible and sustainable rule of law institutions.

On the Peacebuilding Commission, the adoption by the Commission of a Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework for Sierra Leone has injected fresh impetus into the peace consolidation process. UNIOSIL is working closely with Ambassador Majoor, the Peacebuilding Commission's country-specific chair for Sierra Leone, to support the overall work of the Commission. The United Nations mission is advising the Government on the implementation of its commitments contained in the Framework, supporting the Government's preparations for meetings of the Peacebuilding Commission and bringing key stakeholders together to promote peacebuilding activities.

Finally, I would like to say a few words about the mandate and structure of the new proposed mission. As members have seen from the report before the Council, the document sets out the Secretary-General's recommendations on the mandate, structure and strength of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office, as had been requested by the Council. These recommendations were developed through a consultative process that involved various players, including the Department of Political Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, the Peacebuilding Support Office, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, obviously, the Department of Field Support and the country team. These recommendations were also the result of extensive consultations with senior Government officials in Sierra Leone, political parties, civil society and development partners. Every effort has been made to ensure that the new entity, the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office (UNIPSIL), optimizes United Nations system-wide cooperation and synergies in the fulfilment of its mandate.

As outlined in the report, UNIPSIL will assist the Government in several tasks: identifying and resolving political tensions, completing good governance reforms, politically and economically empowering youth and women, implementing the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework, supporting the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund, strengthening the justice sector and supporting security sector reform.

The report proposes that the new office be headed by an Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, who will report directly to the Department of Political Affairs, as well as to the UNDP Administrator, in his or her capacity as United Nations Resident Coordinator and as UNDP Resident Representative. As the Council is aware, since the departure in December of the former Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Victor Angelo, this position has been vacant. The Secretary-General is in the process of identifying a suitable replacement. We expect that the post will be filled shortly.

In conclusion, there are hopeful prospects for Sierra Leone to move forward and improve its socio-economic situation. However, such progress will require the Government to make tough economic and political decisions and implement policies that promote transparency and accountability. It will also require sacrifice and patience on the part of the Sierra Leonean population as the country continues its journey towards full economic and social recovery. I would like to underline that there is a real opportunity to consolidate the gains already made in the country if the international community sustains its support for the peacebuilding process.

Finally, allow me to convey our profound gratitude to the Security Council, the troop- and police-contributing countries, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, our bilateral and multilateral partners and non-governmental organizations for their consistent support to UNIOSIL, which has enabled the Mission to accomplish so much within its mandated tasks. Obviously, we are also grateful to the strong country-specific support of the Peacebuilding Commission, under the impressive leadership of Ambassador Majoor.

Mr. Majoor: Thank you very much, Madam President, for inviting me to participate in the consultations in my capacity as the chair of the Peacebuilding Commission's country-specific meetings on Sierra Leone. My last statement in this capacity before the Security Council dates back to 14 December 2007 (*see S/PV.5804*). On that occasion I briefed the Council on the adoption of the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework by the Government of Sierra Leone and the Peacebuilding Commission. Today I

would like to brief the Council on a number of key developments since then, in particular the advocacy and resource-mobilization efforts of the Peacebuilding Commission and the findings of my recent visit to Sierra Leone.

With the successful adoption of the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework, the engagement of the Commission with Sierra Leone has focused on three primary objectives: generating support for the implementation of the commitments contained in the Framework, broadening of the donor base in Sierra Leone, and triggering new activities or up-scaling existing activities in peacebuilding priority areas. To that end, the Commission agreed on a work plan outlining a focused resource-mobilization, outreach and advocacy strategy. The Framework was transmitted to all relevant stakeholders through a joint letter from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sierra Leone and the Minister for Development Cooperation of the Netherlands.

As the chair of the Sierra Leone country-specific meetings, I undertook ambassadorial-level bilateral meetings and visited key capitals — Washington, London, Brussels, Berlin and The Hague — to raise awareness about the Framework and to garner political and financial support for its implementation. The Government of Sierra Leone did the same and approached various bilateral, regional and multilateral stakeholders for support for the implementation of the Framework. Those advocacy and resource-mobilization efforts will culminate in a high-level stakeholders consultation on the implementation of the Framework in New York on 19 May, in which, I hope, the members of the Security Council will participate actively.

In preparation for that meeting and in order to obtain first-hand information on the status of Framework implementation, I visited Sierra Leone from 21 to 25 April. The programme for the visit included meetings with the President, the Vice-President, other senior representatives of the Government and the majority and minority leaders in parliament, as well as with representatives of the international community and civil society and the private sector. The visit reinforced the commitment of the stakeholders on the ground to the implementation of the Framework and identified some concrete challenges requiring immediate attention from the Government of Sierra Leone and the international community.

Over the last three months, the Government of Sierra Leone, with the support of the United Nations and other partners, has made significant progress in implementing several commitments contained in the Peacebuilding Framework. Impressive developments have taken place in the areas of justice and security sector reform, anti-corruption and energy sector development and in the preparation for local council elections. However, there are also a number of challenges that must be addressed in the next few months. I would like to highlight five challenges here today.

First, the overall economic situation in Sierra Leone remains fragile, especially in light of the rising prices of rice and fuel. President Koroma has stressed that from June 2008 agricultural development and food security will become a new top priority of the Government. The United Nations and other international partners would need to support the Government in ensuring that food security issues do not destabilize the country, especially in the lead-up to the local council elections. The Government has set up a task force on food security.

On the issue of economic recovery, I would also like to note that much of the international assistance to the country continues to be provided through projects, in the absence of sector-wide strategies, programmes and funding mechanisms. The Peacebuilding Commission's high-level stakeholders consultation on Sierra Leone on 19 May will explore specific opportunities for sector-wide support through multi-donor funding mechanisms. In that context I would underline the importance of continued budget support by those donors in a position to provide that to the Government of Sierra Leone.

Secondly, the preparations for the local council elections scheduled for 5 July have been marked by some inter-party and intra-party political tensions. Sierra Leone remains divided along ethnic and geographic lines, requiring intensified efforts for national reconciliation and unity. Isolated episodes have also been recorded, especially in the southern and eastern parts of the country. Those developments underline the importance of continued political engagement by the Peacebuilding Commission with the country. Also — and Mr. Titov referred to this as well — the timely procurement by the United Nations of supplies necessary for holding the local elections needs urgent attention and action.

Thirdly, in the area of youth employment — which is a critical peacebuilding priority area — differences persist on how to best address this challenge. Currently, there is no coherent overall policy framework on youth employment and empowerment, nor is there yet a clear focal point in the Government of Sierra Leone addressing the issue, and the international actors are divided in their approaches. The Government has the intention to establish a national youth commission to address the employment and empowerment of young people. The United Nations system, in particular the United Nations Development Programme, is also — and necessarily — in the process of reviewing its capacity and available technical expertise in this area. The 19 May high-level consultation represents a good opportunity to further explore various proposals and to arrive at a common approach.

Fourthly, although Security Council resolution 1793 (2007) mandated the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) to actively support the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and the implementation of the Framework, that has sometimes been difficult, due to lack of capacity and a temporary absence of leadership at the highest level. The post of the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General for UNIOSIL has not been filled since December of 2007. According to many stakeholders, that has limited the ability of the United Nations to take its leadership role and to be the main interlocutor with the Government of Sierra Leone at this critical juncture. The absence of an Executive Representative has limited the capacity of the United Nations to convene international partners in support of the Framework and, more generally, its coordinating role on the ground.

The fifth challenge is the need for an informal coordination forum on issues related to the Peacebuilding Commission, which a number of stakeholders in Sierra Leone have recognized. This should build on the existing coordination mechanisms such as the Development Partnership Committee and the Peacebuilding Fund steering committee. Both the Government of Sierra Leone and the international donors on the ground are determined to improve and strengthen coordination mechanisms in Freetown, including on Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Fund matters, also in informal settings.

The challenges outlined above require our collective and timely action. I am confident that, given the commitment and the leadership of the Government of Sierra Leone and the continued support of the international community, we will be able to address them. In addition, the 19 May high-level stakeholders consultation and the 19 June biannual review of the Framework will offer opportunities for individual and collective action in response to some of these challenges.

In that regard, I would welcome continued support from the Security Council in ensuring the constructive engagement of all stakeholders in the work of the Peacebuilding Commission, in particular their active participation in the high-level consultation. I would also like to request that, in considering the mandate and the structure of the follow-on integrated peacebuilding mission in Sierra Leone, the Security Council ensure that the office has the dedicated staff capacity to actively support the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and the implementation of the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework. The follow-on mission must also have adequate operational capacity and logistical support to effectively carry out its mandate.

Finally, the apparently imminent nomination of a new Executive Representative of the Secretary-General will ensure the necessary steering in the transition process from UNIOSIL to the follow-on mission and will provide the high-level political support needed in the lead-up to the local council elections and in our collective peacebuilding efforts in support of the Government of Sierra Leone.

The President: I thank Mr. Majoor for his briefing.

There are no further speakers on my list. In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I should now like to invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.